

An Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends

May 2022

We Quakers, members of the Religious Society of Friends, hold strongly to the principle of speaking truth with integrity. We ground our speaking truth in our worship and our searching of ourselves, as we listen deeply and honestly within and across all differences. Our testimony to the world includes standing up for spiritually discerned Truth, the equality of all persons, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and respect and care for our neighbors and the earth. Right now, we see many forces at work in our country and the world that are undermining these basic values. Accordingly, we call on Friends everywhere to act.

In this country, in 2020, we witnessed an attempted coup. The January 6 assault on the Capitol was a deliberate, violent attempt to prevent Joe Biden — the clear winner of the 2020 election — from taking office and keeping then-president Donald Trump in power. To maintain that the last election was riddled with fraud is demonstrably false. This politically motivated movement has now embarked on an orchestrated campaign to suppress voting by black, brown and young people and to pass new state election laws giving the power to throw out huge numbers of valid ballots to highly partisan legislatures, governors, and state attorneys general. Thus, this lie is being used to deprive people of their constitutional rights and constitutes a major injustice.

As Friends, we feel called to speak out against these falsehoods and anti-democratic actions. We encourage Friends to seek spiritual guidance on any actions that you and your meetings might take to witness against this gross injustice. If this politically motivated movement succeeds in its anti-democratic takeover attempt, any hope of making significant progress on racial and economic justice, the equality of all people, the climate crisis, gun violence, and other urgent issues of our time will be gone.

We know that democracy in the United States has many flaws. During the past 100 years, our local, state and federal governments have acted to prevent formerly enslaved people and other communities of color from voting. It was not until 1920 that women finally won the right to vote, and their equality is still being challenged. We call on Friends to act — first, to resist all efforts to undermine our current democratic processes, and second, to support true democratic reforms to our still flawed election system. We cannot allow a government that is built on lies and injustice.

We the undersigned are encouraging Quakers throughout the country to work in their local communities, states, and the national arena to take critical actions to prevent an authoritarian takeover of our democracy. We urge Friends to discern the deep truths that provide a foundation for active love, wisdom, compassion, and a truly democratic electoral system—and then to actively support such changes. We know that love conquers fear. Let us lean into Divine Love and find ways forward in Truth.

On the reverse are two queries for you and your meeting to consider in response to this call. We've also included a list of specific actions that Friends could begin taking now. Some actions may become necessary later if there is another attempted coup during the next presidential election cycle.

MARIAN BEANE

Charlotte Friends Meeting, Piedmont Friends - Yearly Meeting and Fellowship

BRUCE BIRCHARD

Central Philadelphia Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Friends General Conference

LAURA BOYCE

Providence Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Ujima Friends Peace Center

MARTHA BRYANS

Downingtown Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

SAM CALDWELL

Providence Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

GRETCHEN CASTLE

Doylestown Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Dean, Earlham School of Religion, Former General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation World Office

ROBERT DOCKHORN

Green Street Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

TOM EWELL

Whidbey Island Friends Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting

EILEEN FLANAGAN

Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

JOHN HELDING

Lopez Island Friends Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting

AYESHA IMANI

Ujima Friends Meeting, Philadelphia, Clerk, Ujima Friends Peace Center, Former Clerk of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent

PHIL LORD

Ujima Friends Meeting, Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

MARY ELLEN MCNISH

Byberry Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

DIANE RANDALL

Hartford Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Sojourning Friends Meeting of Washington, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

CHRISTINA REPOLEY

Atlanta Friends Meeting, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, Founding Director of Quaker Voluntary Service

COLIN SAXTON

North Valley Friends Meeting, Newberg, Oregon

JOE VOLK

Executive Secretary Emeritus, Friends Committee on National Legislation

MICHAEL WAJDA

Goshen Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sojourning Bennington Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Former Associate Secretary, Friends General Conference

PAM YALLER

Upper Dublin Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Meeting and Organization Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

Queries & Actions

QUERIES

1. What, if anything, is the Light Within calling Friends to do in response to the unprecedented rise of domestic extremism, white supremacy, and authoritarianism that is threatening the destruction of our democracy at home and abroad?
2. How can I/we respond with resolute love even while I/we may be struggling with fear, anger, apathy, or hate?

.....
You can endorse this Quaker message, find additional resources, register for national conversations on these issues, report on specific actions that you, your meeting, or your organization has undertaken, and sign up for continued updates at www.quakercall.net.

We also welcome your questions, suggestions, and resources at info@quakercall.net.

Some queries and suggestions regarding what Friends and meetings might do in response to the *Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends*

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Defending Truth

We urge all Friends to discern the deep truths that provide a foundation for active love, wisdom, compassion, and peace in the world — and then to defend them.

We ask:

- Individual Friends to search yourselves about the threats to our country, and the world, and to witness publicly to the truths that you discern are grounded in your experience of the Spirit.
- Quaker meetings and organizations to issue public statements calling out lies and the purveyors of lies, all in the context of our understanding of love, equality, and justice for all.

Working for True Equality and Justice for All

We urge Friends to act for equality and equity within our diverse society:

- Join or support organizations led by people of color which are working for the empowerment of black, brown, indigenous and Asian people and communities.
- Speak, write, and protest in support for full equality of all people in American society, whatever their racial or sexual identity, gender, or class.
- Support legislative and economic changes that would lead to actual equity among all peoples.

Promoting Free and Fair Elections

Stemming from our testimonies of Integrity and Equality, we urge Friends to:

- Support non-partisan voter-registration drives, particularly in communities under attack from those seeking to prevent them from voting.
- Publicly condemn partisan efforts to restrict access to voting.
- Confront partisan efforts to seize control of the election administration apparatus.
- Support conscientious, non-partisan election officials in our communities.
- Volunteer as poll workers, election monitors, and drivers to get people to the polls.

Preparing for Non-Violent Resistance

We believe that as a religious society grounded in nonviolence, we can:

- Initiate discussions on the impacts of voter suppression and new laws enabling partisan actors to legally throw out ballots and change the results of elections, then garnering support for nonviolent resistance against all this, and forming community-based networks of support for such actions.
- Arrange for nonviolent direct-action training in our Quaker meetings and organizations, as well as with others in our larger communities.
- Form small “affinity groups” that can prepare to carry out direct actions in support of free and fair elections and the state and local officials who support them.
- Support wider efforts to plan and organize nonviolent resistance on a state and nationwide level, as needed.